

# Coalition to Stop Preventable Disease



Children First  
for Oregon



**Problem:** Oregon ranks among the very lowest in immunizations nationwide.<sup>1</sup> Of children younger than 3 years old, fewer than 90 percent have received even a single dose of the MMR (mumps, measles, and rubella) vaccine, and only 66.6 percent have completed all the recommended immunizations.<sup>2</sup> Our state's low immunization rates affect all ages of our youth, leaving many Oregonians vulnerable to a multitude of diseases.

The recent measles outbreak in infants and young children demonstrates what a serious public health and safety concern Oregon's low vaccination level is. The Coalition to Stop Preventative Disease is worried about the potential for further outbreaks of preventable communicable and infectious diseases.

**Solution:** We support policies that work to promote wellness and prevent the spread of disease. Our coalition works to ensure that Oregonians receive the proper vaccinations to attend school and stay healthy, and remove unnecessary exemptions to immunization requirements in order to meet the compelling public health needs of this state. **Senate Bills 580 and 869 would allow unvaccinated children to attend school by the choice of the school administrator and pose additional barriers to children receiving evidence-based prevention in the form of immunizations. These bills work against the goal we are trying to achieve in better public health outcomes.**

When a child does not have the required vaccinations or medical exemptions to attend school, current law reads that "the child may not be allowed to attend school." The proposed Senate bills change this language to make it a choice of the school or facility administrator for the child to attend. This places the public health decision-making with the school administrator, who is likely not an expert in disease prevention, potentially endangering their classmates and communities.

In addition, Senate Bill 869 adds additional and unnecessary layers to the process of obtaining informed consent, including requiring that parents receive information about filing an injury claim from a vaccination, prior to their child receiving the immunization. The additional provisions in the bill only effectively work to scare patients.

Evidence-based studies continue to find that vaccines do not cause diseases, they prevent them.<sup>3</sup> The diseases that vaccinations prevent are not benign childhood illnesses. They are diseases that present serious complications and can even be fatal. As you consider the implications of these bills, please consider the invaluable health safeguards vaccinations have on those who have compromised immune systems, infants, and the elderly.

Oregon has a duty to children's health and to the public health and safety of our state to ensure that children receive effective vaccinations and that we limit barriers and exemptions to children receiving immunizations. **We encourage you to look for more comprehensive and robust strategies to limit the spread of disease and educate the public on the effectiveness of vaccines than those outlined in Senate Bills 580 and 869.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2015-annual-report/measure/Immunize/state/ALL>

<sup>2</sup> <http://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/VaccinesImmunization/Documents/RatesNISOregon.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/VaccinesImmunization/VaccineSafety/Pages/VaxFacts.aspx>